

Tattersall's improved Psalmody.

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TESTIMONIES already published in Favour of IMPROVED PSALMODY.

An anxious desire to improve the state of parochial Psalmody throughout the kingdom has produced from this zealous and indefatigable Divine several powerful endeavours to effect that purpose. To remove the ridicule attached to the very awkward version of Sternhold, and to supply at once the best that could be wished, Mr. Tattersall long ago (in 1789) divided Merrick's excellent Translation into Stanzas, adapted to Music, and published it in that form; and having found, as we understand, from his own experience, that simple tunes in three parts are easily learned by parochial singers, he issued at the same time a selection of such tunes. To give the plan every attraction that the best music can bestow, he has since obtained the assistance of all the most eminent Composers of the age*, and to obviate the only objection on which any stress has been laid, but which, we think, has little foundation, that the words of this elegant

* Dr. Haydn, Dr. Cooke, Dr. Hayes, Dr. Dupuis, Dr. Arnold, Sir Wm. Parsons, Dr. Harrington, Mr. Calcott, the Rev. Osborne Wight, Mr. Webb, Mr. Shield, Mr. Stevens, Mr. J. Stafford Smith, Mr. Atterbury, &c. &c. &c.

version are too difficult to be understood by the common people, he now publishes the present specimen of an edition, with a literal Paraphrase annexed.

BRITISH CRITIC for Feb. 1795.

To be had of Messrs. RIVINGTONS, St. Paul's Church Yard; G. NICOL, Pall Mall; LEIGH and SOTHEY, York Street, Covent Garden; HURST, Paternoster Row; HATCHARD, Piccadilly; HURST and MEGGIT, Wakefield; the Booksellers in Oxford and Cambridge; and of T. SKILLERN, Music-seller, St. Martin's Lane, to whom the Advocates for this Undertaking, who are willing to become Subscribers, are desired to send their Names and Places of Abode.

It is but justice to say, that the Music, as far as it has yet been published, does the highest honour to the abilities of the several Composers. It is simple, solemn, and pleasing. We cannot doubt that Mr. Tatterfall's plan will be attended with success, but we reserve our farther remarks till the appearance of the splendid edition in quarto, which he has promised. We cannot, however, forbear observing, as a circumstance which does peculiar honour to the feelings of the editor, that he disclaims all possibility of profit in an undertaking prosecuted merely for the service of religion, and sells every part of his publications at such a price as will merely prevent a ruinous loss to himself.

BRITISH CRITIC for Feb. 1795.

It has happened more than once, that we have had occasion to allude to the nature and progress of Mr. Tatterfall's very laudable undertaking in favour of Mr. Merrick's excellent version of the Psalms. In the present case, we are happy to perceive, that a judicious and learned Divine has taken up the argument for him, and recommended it in very forcible terms. The veneration in which the Psalms of David, the genuine dictates of the prophetic spirit, have been held in all ages of christianity, points them out as the fittest Hymns that can possibly be employed for the purposes of divine worship; and the faults of the earlier versions form the only sound objection to their use that can be suggested. The version of Merrick is known to be at once faithful and elegant, the result of sound learning and poetical genius. Dr. Munkhouse has therefore done laudably in adopting and recommending that Version; and the more this example shall be followed, the better it will be for the credit of parochial Psalmody. This whole Discourse is sensible, and well written, but we shall particularly submit to notice his character of Merrick's Version.

BRITISH CRITIC on Munkhouse's Sermon.

The advantage which this Version possesses over every other, does not merely consist in the peculiar elegance of the style, but also in the successful manner in which the probable meaning of the Psalmist is, for the most part, ascertained. It is (if I may so say) a lively Commentary and Exposition of abstruse Passages. Many of those hasty transitions, by which we had been hitherto startled and perplexed, are rendered easy and intelligible. Most of the obscurities arising from the sudden change of persons and interlocutors removed, and the Psalms in which they occur, appear now sufficiently correct, and assume an air of regular compositions. Vide Dr. Munkhouse's Sermon, p. 19. The British Critic in its comment remarks, "This is no more than is strictly, justly true."

Dr. Munkhouse, in an advertisement to his second sermon on parochial Psalmody, observes, "The delay which has taken place in the publication of the following Discourse affords the author a seasonable opportunity of congratulating all true lovers of sacred Music of the recent appearance of the 2d and 3d Numbers of improved Psalmody. A work which continues to display the most grateful evidence of the abilities and zeal of Mr. Tatterfall's musical coadjutors. One half of the whole is now before the public, and the wish to see it brought to a conclusion naturally finds a place in the breasts of those, who have paid any attention to its progress, and are at all anxious that the labours of the editor should be ultimately crowned with success."

Dr. Munkhouse noticing the work with its several branches in his sermon preached for the benefit of his choir, speaks of them in the following terms, viz.

Of the merits of the Version which I have been encouraged to introduce to you, there exists not (I have reason to believe) two opinions. In it the sweet Psalmist of Israel is made to speak a language not unworthy of himself, and the Levites, let it be presumed the sons of Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, might have been induced to exalt their voices, and tune their willing instruments of praise to the admirable compositions of our eminent Professors. I gladly embrace this opportunity of acknowledging the gratification I have experienced in the encomiums that have been so liberally bestowed on the accompanying Paraphrase. The felicity with which it pursues the text, and unravels its occasional intricacies, cannot fail to communicate, at the same time, information and pleasure. P. 25.

We may remark that the Psalmody alone has ever been the subject of general animadversion; that frequent attempts

have been made, with the concurrence of the rulers of our church, to improve it, most of which have hitherto greatly failed of success; and that such an undertaking as this of Mr. Tattersall's appears to be still (and is indeed now more than ever) absolutely necessary. Note in Dr. Munkhouse's Sermon, p. 29.

In earlier times, when the language of the country was less perfect, the translation of course wanted many of the essential properties of metrical compositions. This was so evident, that an attempt has been made by many, who, to the ardour of piety, united elegance of taste, and solidity of learning, to produce versions of the sacred hymns, which might both please the ear, and elevate the mind. Laudable was the motive, and in many instances, and to a certain degree, successful the attempt: but it is, I believe, universally allowed, that the Version which your choir, sanctioned by your approbation, has adopted, is abundantly superior to every other, both in harmony of numbers, and accuracy of translation. The Translator hath adorned it with the Graces of Poetry, and the Editor recommended it by the Charms of Music.—Mr. Clapham's Sermon, p. 10.

Solicitous as a minister of the Gospel to diffuse the knowledge of the sacred writings, and having seen some melancholy instances of, attended with the most deplorable effects resulting from, the misapplication of them, I cannot but congratulate you on your having introduced a Version of the Psalms, which is accompanied with a Paraphrase worthy of the learning and the piety of the excellent and disinterested Editor; a Paraphrase which solicits the perusal, because it conveys the sense of those beautiful effusions: for multitudes, without such pious assistance, would, it is probable, have remained strangers to the holy resolutions they excite, and the sublime devotion they inspire.—Mr. Clapham's Sermon, p. 11.

The compilers of an excellent Biographical Dictionary, speaking of the Psalms translated or paraphrased by Mr. Merrick, observes, that

This is his great Work, the only defect of which was, that, not being divided into stanzas, it could not be set to music for parochial use. This objection has been removed, since the author's death, by the Rev. W. D. Tattersall; who, with great and laudable zeal for the improvement of our parochial Psalmody, has published three editions, properly divided, and procured tunes to be composed for them by the best Masters; in which excellent work he still perseveres, at a prodigious expence of time, attention and cost, which we cannot but hope will be crowned with success, as such an improved Version is certainly very desirable.